

## MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Through their work with the public, King County's 642 Master Gardeners address a range of environmental issues.

- Environmentally safe ways to treat plant diseases. Sometimes no disease is present or no treatment is needed. Often a non-chemical method of treatment is prescribed. When chemicals are necessary, Master Gardeners will always advise that the least toxic, yet effective, substance be used.
- Water conservation. Master Gardeners teach about drought-tolerant plants and encourage their use. They demonstrate efficient ways of watering, ways that get water into the soil and to the plants rather than evaporating into the air or running down a driveway into the storm sewer. Less water runoff also means smaller amounts of pesticides and fertilizers washing away.
- Detection of new insects and diseases and invasive plants. Master Gardeners are being seen as front-line information providers, and their country-wide network can quickly alert communities and scientists to potential threats.
- The work of Master Gardeners has an economic impact as well. For example, poor management is the main killer of urban trees and shrubs. Master Gardeners help both home gardeners and municipalities learn how to plant, prune, and care for what is often a substantial investment. Trees add value to a landscape, both public and private. Shade trees reduce the need for air conditioning, thereby cutting down on energy usage. Trees planted in a city reduce smog, dust, and noise, and cities spend less on cleaning up polluted air, soil, and water.



Master Gardener Diagnosticians working at the Diagnostic Center Lab  
*Photo WSU KCE staff*

### WSU King County Extension Master Gardener Program Serves as a Model for National and International Programs

#### Japan

In November, Program Coordinator Elaine Anderson traveled to Japan at the invitation of Hyogo Prefecture to explain the King County Master Gardener program in detail. She spoke at the International Landscape Planning & Horticultural Forum, held in both Toyko and Awaji.



Anderson, fourth from left, with Awaji conference participants  
*Photo Conference Staff*

#### Texas and Florida

Its volunteer retention rate of 91% has drawn the attention of programs in Texas and Florida. Anderson has been working with these programs to help them improve their retention of volunteers.

## Teaching Environmentally Safe Gardening Practices

In 2005 WSU King County Extension Master Gardeners volunteered 26,000 hours and provided 42,000 adult residents of King County with accurate information about environmentally safe gardening practices. This information is provided through 34 Plant Clinics, a Diagnostic Center, 12 Demonstration and Outreach Gardens, a Master Gardener Phone Clinic, and a Speakers Bureau.

Master Gardeners also educate children and youth in 22 children's gardens and through a classroom outreach program. In 2005, Master Gardeners worked with 8,200 young people.

A survey of adults who used the services of the Master Gardener program in 2005 showed 74% reported an increased knowledge of environmentally sustainable gardening practices, and 57% indicated they would change their gardening practices based on what they had learned



Youth activity led by Master Gardener Emily Bishton  
*File Photo*

### Interested in becoming a King County Master Gardener?

Applications are available and accepted only during August and September each year for classes that begin the following January. During these months you can download an application form from <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/Gardening/MasterGardener/HowToApply.htm> or request one by calling the Master Gardener office:

206-205-3122

*For more information about the King County Master Gardener Program, please visit our Web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/wsu-ce/> or call 206-205-3122.*

*Elaine Anderson*

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